

Jim Hopper: Chief, Father, and Telephone Operator by Rosy_el

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Summary:

"Dad?" El called through the door. "Can you come here?"

(El was fourteen--at least that was their estimate. Jim should've seen it coming.)

Jim Hopper: Chief, Father, and Telephone Operator

Author's Note:

El gets her first period so if that freaks you out then

A) you might be a pansy because this is the process of life.

B) you really don't need to worry because it's cute and funny, alright?

C) you should just read it.

May, 1985

"I'm home, Dad!" El called as she walked through the front door. She had called Jim "Chief Hopper" for the first four months of her living with him until he finally sat her down and asked if she was okay with being officially adopted.

"I'll be your..." he had coughed and rubbed at the scruff lining his jaw. Sarah's smile lit the back of his eyelids and he remembered it was she who wanted him to do this in the first place. He knew it. *"I'll be your dad—but only if you want that."* El had cried. She had called him 'Dad' ever since.

It was 6:16, around the time El arrived home for dinner each night. Jim wasn't always that punctual though, having to adjust to preparing a meal by a certain time each evening had proved difficult for him. They ate out a lot.

El's stomach had hurt all day, pinching pains prodding her lower abdomen. She brushed it off when Mike had asked her if she was alright, noting the paleness of her complexion. She figured she was just hungry, but deep down, El doubted that was the source of this aching.

She went straight to the bathroom, not totally sure why but not putting a lot of thought into it either. As she pulled her swimsuit off—it was the last day of school for the boys and they had all gone to play in the sprinklers and throw water balloons at the Sinclair house—El took a sharp breath, eyes fixed on the angry red spot wetting the

part of her suit that came right up between her legs. Blood.

Her face grew tense. The only reasons she ever bled was from either using her powers or getting cut. She hadn't used her abilities in a while—having no need for them and not wanting to remember her dark past. This new life she had been gifted with was normal and Eleven liked it that way. She searched quickly for a scratch or cut but found no evidence—nothing different down there other than the red stuff on her fingertips. She thought to yell for Jim, but almost immediately decided against it.

This seemed like something she shouldn't tell him and she wasn't sure why.

"Dad?" She called through the door. No answer. El cracked the door open with her clean hand and smooshed her lips into the opening—scared no longer of being in a closed off room alone. After all, she could always *just barely* hear Hopper's thick snoring at night from down the hall through her bedroom door, so it was never a question whether he was near or not. "Dad," she called again. She could hear something sizzling on the stovetop around the corner in the kitchen.

The simmering grew quieter as Jim turned down the heat. "Yeah?" He replied. El swallowed, unsure.

"Can you come here?"

Jim frowned and turned the heat on the chicken down even lower. "Uh, why?"

"Please?" Was all he heard back. Shrugging, he pulled the *very manly* apron he had on (a Christmas gift from Eleven) over his head and tossed it onto the kitchen counter.

"Where are you, El?" Jim asked aloud, scratching his arm absentmindedly. *Hey, the chicken smells good*; he made a mental note.

"The bathroom," her voice came, softer. He pinched his eyebrows and leaned up against the wall beside the bathroom. She heard him reach the door. "Can you hand me the phone?" she asked.

Jim's brow bent down, his eyes narrowing. "You want me to hand

you the telephone?”

“Yes.”

He turned and glanced at the landline hanging on the wall a foot to the right of the bathroom door. Shaking his head, he grabbed the phone and held it to the sliver of light coming from the crack in the doorway. El’s hand darted out and snatched it, the cord of the phone getting pinched in the door. Jim watched in confused silence.

“Can you dial the number for me?” El inquired.

“Great, I’m the operator now too? Why don’t you just come out of there?” Jim rubbed his chin.

“Six-four-three-nine—”

“Oh, hold up now,” Jim brought his hand to the numbered buttons on the part of the telephone rooted to the wall. “Six-three-what?”

“Six-*four*-three-nine-nine-two-seven.”

“Because being sheriff isn’t enough, no—now I’ve got to be the telephone operator in this town, too.” Jim muttered under his breath, returning to the kitchen to tend to the dinner after dialing the number.

The phone dialed and rung loudly in El’s ear.

“Hello?” Mike picked up. Eleven huffed irritably, a flush coming to her face. *He* was definitely not who she wanted to talk to at the moment. “Hello?” he repeated.

She sighed heavily into the phone.

“What the heck—” Mike whispered, mouth farther from the receiver.

“Is Nancy there?” El asked impatiently.

“El?” Mike’s voice was louder. “El, is that you? Nancy? Why do you need Nancy?”

El rolled her eyes. Mike always asked so many questions. Normally it was cute, but Eleven was unamused and also maybe slowly bleeding to death. “I need her, is she there?”

“No, she’s not home. I think she’s at a school thing or with Steve. Eh, yeah, probably with Steve.”

El rubbed at her forehead. What was she supposed to do now? She shut her eyes in an effort to think. They reopened and she bit her lip. “Is your mom there?” She asked, defeated.

There was a shuffle on the other side of the phone. “MOM!” Mike yelled. El ripped the phone away from her ear, wincing. Karen’s voice filled the air. “Michael! Stop yelling! I’m right here, what is it?” More shuffling.

And then:

“El?” Her voice was smooth and automatically eased Eleven. “Hi sweetheart, is everything alright?”

Eleven explained the blood in her swimsuit awkwardly, voice growing quiet at some points and prompting Karen to ask El too speak a little louder into the phone, *sweetie*.

At the end, El stood chewing her lip, finger wrapped up in the phone cord. “Oh, *honey*,” Karen murmured into the receiver. “Um, is your dad there?”

Jim came back to the door upon El’s request and took the phone. El sat on the toilet, hugging her arms around her bare torso as she waited.

“Wait, Karen?” Jim asked into the white telephone. Eleven could hear Mrs. Wheeler’s voice buzzing though the receiver still. “What? ...Oh. Oh.” Jim stiffened. This hadn’t even crossed his mind. No wonder El wouldn’t come out. El was fourteen now—at least that was the estimate. Jim should’ve seen it coming. “Yeah, I’ll be sure to do that. Yep, I’ll run by the drugstore. Uh-huh. Okay. Bye now. What? Okay, bye.” Eleven could hear Jim stir and then the telephone popped back through the crack in the doorway. El took it.

“Hi,” she greeted meekly.

Karen dove into a calm and empathetic explanation of what was happening to El. Suddenly Eleven was very, *very* glad she had not first confided in her dad, or—she blushed brightly—in *Mike*. At the end Karen gently explained sanitation and pads and tampons and cramps—effectively providing an answer to El’s pained stomach. Karen told El she could go to her or Nancy or even Joyce if she had any more questions come up later. El offered a shy but grateful “Thank you” at the end of the conversation.

She peeked out of the door and saw a pile of clean pajamas and underwear on the carpeted floor, a little plastic square sitting on top. Setting the phone on the sink, she collected the stuff in her arms, thinking warmly of her dad who she was unaware sat patiently outside the door. She slipped on the purple matching set of pajamas and unwrapped the plastic square, pressing its contents neatly into her bottoms like Karen had said to do. El finally came out from the bathroom and looked timidly at Jim.

“I ran to the store for some stuff while you finished up with Karen,” he said gingerly. El could see a note crumpled in his hand (he had written it and left it on the fridge in case she wrapped up her phone conversation before he got back, explaining he had driven to the pharmacy). “The chicken burned.”

El frowned remorsefully, feeling responsible for ruining the dinner.

“Want to eat out?” Jim asked, still sitting on the carpet.

“I’m in my pajamas.”

“Doesn’t matter. Let’s go,” he tossed her swimsuit in the wash without a word and they drove to the Denny’s downtown, El happily in her purple pajama set. They even grabbed ice cream on the way home. Jim got mint chip. El did too.

Author's Note:

I love Hopper and El's relationship so if anyone's got some more cute ideas, let me know:)

-Rosy